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ABSTRACT

This annotated video transcript follows the discussion of six experts in community relations and charter schools. The panel was convened as part of an initiative to identify the specific needs of charter-school founders and to develop a leadership-training program designed to address those needs. Each member of the panel shared his or her insights on public relations, community relations, and public affairs. They emphasized the need for continued, planned, and active participation with and within a community to maintain and enhance its environment to the benefit both of the organization and the community. The experts discussed the four steps of plan development--research, planning, implementation, evaluation--and the importance of acknowledging milestones and special events in the life of a charter school. They also underscored the importance of message development and the use of the op-ed section of the newspaper, an important source of information for community leaders. Some of the other topics considered by the panel include the use of public-relations experts and the building of relationships. Ways in which charter-school leaders can circulate their message are through letters to the editor, presentations, targeting audiences (potential students and parents), and a Web site. (Contains 12 references.) (RJM)

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CHARTER SCHOOLS & COMMUNITY RELATIONS

An Annotated Video Transcript

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

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CHARTER SCHOOLS & COMMUNITY RELATIONS

An Annotated Video Transcript

September 1999

Karen Lytle Blaha, Susan Vincent, Jed Schwendiman, Editors

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Preface

The opportunity to create public schools of choice—charter schools—has opened a door for change to the structure of the traditional public system of education. Conceived in the interest of systemic school improvement, charters have been steeped in controversy from their inception, and will continue to face confrontation from multiple opponents. Adversaries will persist with questions about innovations, increases in student achievement, and the ultimate impact on the traditional public system. Early research has produced a mix of findings—some studies support while others attack approaches and efforts of charter schools. Nevertheless, the freedom to create public schools of choice has enjoyed bipartisan support as the number of charter schools across the country continues to grow.

Charter-school founders face numerous hurdles as they attempt to create thriving new charter schools or successfully convert existing schools to charter status.

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) has worked with a team of charter-school experts (including founders, operators, researchers, state education agency representatives, charter-school association representatives, and an attorney) to identify the specific needs of charter-school founders and to develop a leadership training program designed to address those specific needs. Called Charter Starters, the training program has five components designed to assist charter-school founders as they work to create high-quality, successful, public charter schools. The five components of Charter Starters are:

- Start-up logistics
- Regulatory issues
- Assessment and accountability
- Governance and management, and
- Community relations

This document and the companion videotape were developed as a part of the community relations component.

Introduction

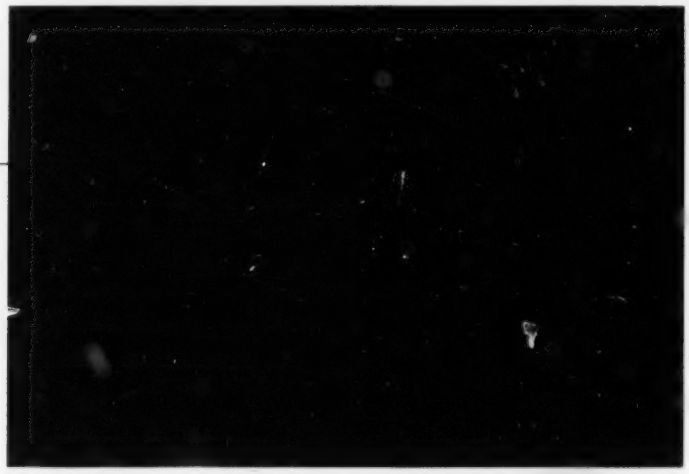
All schools need a good community relations program—it's in their best interest and the interest of those they serve. Because public charter schools are new, they have an even greater need to establish and build positive community relations. In this information age with escalating technology, the scope of communication has expanded greatly.

That's why the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory convened a panel of experts in community relations and charter schools to share their knowledge and experience. It wasn't likely that those same experts would ever be convened again. To capture the wisdom and tested community relations strategies that they shared—so that we might share with you—we set their discussion in the studios of Oregon Public Broadcasting to videotape the session that was held during a Charter Schools Leadership Development Academy. Some of the academy participants required hearing and language accommodation. Simultaneous American Sign Language and Spanish language translations were provided on the set. The resulting video is closed-captioned for the hearing-impaired viewer.

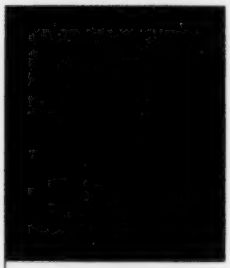
The audience—that is, the participants in the academy—came from different parts of the United States, including Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, Texas, and Utah. (For the full list, see "Audience," p. 30.) Our panelists came from New York, California, Michigan, and Oregon.

By the way, we'd like to note that this is a transcript of a *conversation*. When oral conversation is converted to a written form, it becomes obvious that there were stops and starts, frequent pauses, a grasping for the right word or expression. Conversation, by its nature, has a more casual grammatical construction and tends to be a verbalization of the thought process as it is occurring. In a similar vein, the photographs in this document are from the show as it was occurring; they were captured and reproduced from the videotape.

Let's introduce our panelists.



Panelists



GAIL DUNDAS, APR
Intel Corporation

Gail Dundas is the consummate public relations practitioner, believing in the power of well-done communications and skillfully executing the strategies to achieve it. Accredited by the National Public Relations Society of America, an attainment signaled by the APR designation following her name, Gail has provided public relations counsel to organizations since 1986. Since 1997, she has served as Community Relations Manager for the Intel Corporation's Oregon site, the company's largest and most complex site worldwide. She directs a team responsible for Intel's employee volunteerism, neighbor and community relations, and commute-reduction programs.

During her career, Gail headed public relations for a prominent Northwest public relations agency, handling responsibilities that ranged from news conferences for state-elected officials to crisis management for a national client. She's worked as an independent consultant with an impressive client roster, including serving as spokesperson for statewide-issue elections to managing the pressroom in Washington, D.C., for the National Head Start Association's 30th anniversary.

Gail, a winner of several awards from the Public Relations Society of America chapter in Portland, Oregon, is coauthor of *Portland: Riches of a City*, a coffee-table book about Portland, Oregon, published in 1998. Her writings have appeared in numerous Northwest publications.

MARK HATFIELD JR.
Burson-Marsteller

Mark is Managing Director of the Public Affairs Practice of Burson-Marsteller, New York City. The firm is a recognized worldwide communications leader. Mark, holding a noteworthy record of service in the communications business with national and international experience in public relations, media relations, and legislative affairs, came to Burson-Marsteller from the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey. There he served as the Director of Corporate Communications, overseeing all internal and external communications for the $3 billion-a-year transportation agency. At the Port Authority, Mark directed media relations, corporate marketing and advertising, internal and external publications, creative design and production services, and records management. In addition to promoting

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service and construction initiatives, he effectively sought to improve the agency's public image and protect the Port Authority's standing in the financial community.

During his tenure, Mark headed the communications response to the crash of TWA Flight 800, the FedEx MD-11 crash at Newark, and the Swissair Flight 111 tragedy. He managed the regionwide media response to the blizzard of 1996 and initiated a wide range of image rebuilding projects, including the publication of *Perpetual Motion* and *The Sky's the Limit*. Mark was also executive producer of a documentary film on Kennedy Airport that aired on WCBS television. He revamped the Port Authority's entire internal-communications mechanism. In response to the growing public criticism of the three metropolitan airports and the Authority's stewardship of them, Mark developed the "We've Got a Whole New Altitude" campaign to restore confidence in the nation's largest aviation complex.

His communications expertise has been gleaned from two decades in public and private sector roles in organizations that include the White House; the U.S. Department of Energy; the Bonneville Power Administration; the U.S. Department of Commerce; Merrill Lynch; Verner, Liipfert; and the Schmidt/Westerdahl Group. He also served on the national staff of the 1980 and 1984 Reagan presidential campaigns and the successful 1988 Bush presidential bid.

SHERRY S. KNIGHT
Knight Writers

Knight Writers President Sherry Knight has extensive experience developing and directing communications for business transitions, such as changes in organizational focus, increased competition, deregulation, downsizing, and rapid growth. Sherry specializes in leveraging the benefits of transitions through communications with local communities, customers, media, employees, shareholders, and policymakers. She formed her own PR consulting firm in July 1996. Clients include the Michigan Association of Public School Academies; a Virginia-based global government contractor diversifying to private industry; and a Michigan university expanding its presence in a large metropolitan market.

Sherry has 13 years of professional public relations and journalism experience. At Ameritech, she was the senior executive responsible for public relations in Michigan. She developed communications programs targeting 16,500 employees and external audiences statewide during a time of extensive reorganization and the onset of competition. She served as key spokesperson, counseled executives on internal and external communications, and managed complex, sensitive issues such as office closures, declining customer service, and area-code introductions. In 1995, Sherry shaped the PR strategy for a successful state legislative effort worth more than $600 million annually to the corporation. In the media field, Sherry was an award-winning reporter at the Jackson (MI) *Citizen Patriot* and the Annapolis (MD) *Capital*. In Jackson, she investigated prisons and county government. Her coverage of a National Guard unit during the Persian Gulf War included a stint in Saudi Arabia. In Annapolis, she covered the U.S. Naval Academy and the environment. She graduated with honors from Central Michigan University with a bachelor's degree in journalism. She has received Awards of Excellence in feature writing, news writing, and employee communications.

ROBERT (BOB) LANDAUER
The Oregonian

Bob Landauer began his newspaper career at age 10 on his father's rural New England newspaper route. He continued it, while still a teenager, as a stringer-photographer for UPI and, later, *The New York Times.*

Bob is editorial columnist of *The Oregonian,* the largest newspaper in the Pacific Northwest and 25th largest in the United States. He served 16 years as the newspaper's editorial-page editor, five years as associate editor, two years as metropolitan editor, five years as financial editor, two years as investigative reporter, and one year as general-assignment reporter. A graduate of Harvard College, Bob did graduate work at Columbia University's East Asian Institute, received a Republic of China Fellowship, and studied in Asia under a U.S. government Fulbright program. He has lectured in China on press issues at the invitation of the United Nations and the Chinese government. He worked in Asia and the United States for *Time* magazine before coming to *The Oregonian* in 1966.

Bob's articles, editorials, and columns have received dozens of public-service citations and more than 50 journalism awards. Some of the more notable among the latter: Pulitzer Prize Finalist (twice); Paul Tobenkin Memorial Award; Mencken Awards; National Headliner Award; Scripps Howard Foundation National Journalism Award Finalist; Unity Awards in Media; SPJ Excellence in Journalism; and Best in the West.

JOE LUCENTE
Fenton Avenue Charter School

Joe Lucente, Codirector of Fenton Avenue Charter School, Los Angeles, brings to the discussion of community relations an exceptional blend of savvy and experience in relationship development, news-media relations, public education, and public charter schools.

This former administrative officer in the United States Air Force spent three-plus years in management positions with the Los Angeles *Herald-Examiner* and 29 years in education (two of them abroad). Born in Washington state to immigrant Italian-American parents, Joe then lived, went to school, and worked in Los Angeles most of his life. He's been a teacher and administrator with the Los Angeles Unified School District for 20 of the past 26 years. Joe received a bachelor's degree in business administration from Loyola University, Los Angeles, in 1964, then a master of science degree in educational administration from California State University, Los Angeles in 1975.

On January 1, 1994, Fenton Avenue Elementary School became California's 30th charter

school and one of few which are autonomous from the local school district. Fenton Avenue Charter School is currently the largest elementary charter school in the nation and a nationally recognized model of a conversion charter school.

As Codirector of Fenton Avenue Charter School for the past five-plus years, Joe has helped to guide his school along a successful path. It was named a 1997 California Distinguished School.

Joe was one of five charter-school directors from across the nation invited to a White House conference for new District of Columbia charter schools. There he shared his successes and experiences with the First Lady and the United States Department of Education, sponsors of the conference, and the 22 new area charter-school administrators.

Joe's inventory of professional activities includes member of the Board of Directors of the Valley Industry and Commerce Association (VICA) and chair of its Education Committee; chair of the Alliance of Los Angeles County Charter Schools; member of the Board of Directors of the San Fernando Valley Economic Alliance; member of State Superintendent Eastin's Charter School Advisory Committee; and member of the California Legislature's Advisory Panel for Interim Evaluation of Charter School Effectiveness. Joe is (at the time of the taping) president-elect of the California Network of Educational Charters (CANEC) that represents over 200 California charter schools with over 80,000 students.

ERIC PREMACK
Charter Schools Development Center, California State University

Eric Premack proficiently points the charter-schools course within the intricate arenas of school policy, legislation, and operations, making the complex understandable.

Eric is Codirector of the Charter Schools Development Center at the Institute for Education Reform at California State University, Sacramento, where he works with schools, charter-granting agencies, and state-level policymakers to both create charter schools and develop and implement charter-schools legislation and policies.

Eric has been involved with the development of the charter school concept since its inception in his native Minnesota in the 1980s. He is known for his expertise in education finance, management, and labor relations issues and his indepth grasp of the practical details of charter schools and charter-schools legislation. Eric has written and published extensively on a variety of charter-school-related topics and issues, including articles for periodicals, technical "how-to" materials for charter-school developers, and indepth charter-school policy analyses.

He is a frequent speaker at state- and national-level conferences of education and charter-school groups, advises state- and national-level policymakers, provides extensive consulting services to charter-school developers and sponsors, and is staff to a U.S. Department of Education-sponsored national study of charter schools.

Eric formerly was Associate Director of Fiscal and Management Services with School Services of California, Inc., a major Sacramento-based school-district-management consulting firm, where he provided fiscal, labor relations, and management consulting services for

dozens of California school districts and county offices of education. Previously, he was a K-12 education policy and finance analyst with California's nonpartisan Office of the Legislative Analyst where he advised the Legislature on major K-12 education fiscal issues.

He holds a master's with an education-policy concentration from the University of Chicago's Harris School of Public Policy.

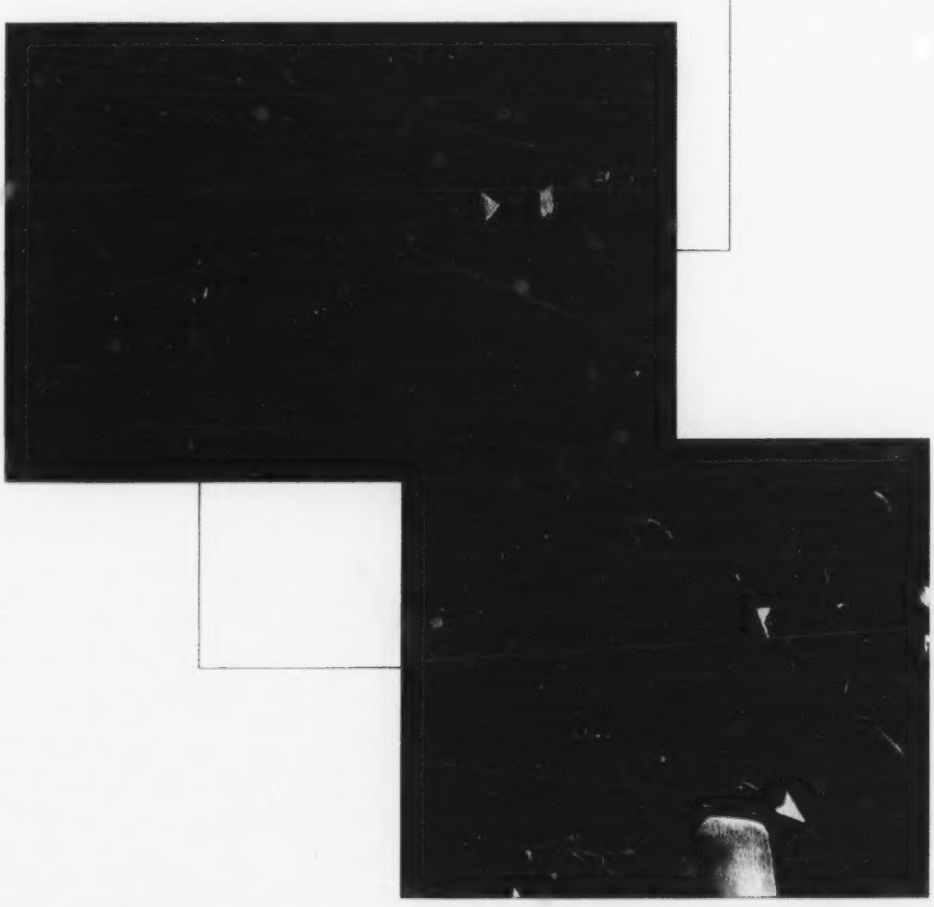
SHARON MITCHELL
Moderator

A graduate of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York City, Sharon has experience with feature roles in a wide variety of documentary films and theatrical productions. In Portland, Oregon, she has reported and anchored the news for both independent and NBC-affiliated television stations. She also has extensive experience in radio and industrial films for major corporations, including Hewlett Packard, Novell, Texaco, and U.S. Bank.

Charter Schools and Community Relations Transcript

A Panel Discussion with Audience Participation

What follows is an annotated transcript of the videotape of the Charter Schools and Community Relations discussion. The actual discussion took almost two hours—too long for an informational video! Yet there were some points that we wanted to include, so we've maintained them in this guide. And there were times when we wished the panel had had more time to explain or elaborate on a topic. So we've included elaboration where we thought it would be helpful, drawing from other experts and resources to explain basic concepts. Even so, we couldn't include everything, and an annotated transcript isn't an instructional manual, so look at the end for references and additional resources.



Sharon: Charter schools and community relations. Why is that intersection so important? And what's the difference between public relations and community relations? Or public relations, community relations, and public affairs? Sound confusing? Well, it can be.

Sharon

Hi. I'm ***Sharon Mitchell***. Welcome to the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's panel discussion on charter schools and community relations. I will be your moderator for what I promise will be a fascinating and lively program.

First, let me set the stage for you. We've assembled a panel whose daily jobs involve the skillful art and science of applied community relations or public relations. We are going to tap into the panel's individual and collective wisdom. We have some specific scenarios we want them to react to. Next, we will invite an audience of charter-school founders and developers to interact and sometimes cross-examine the panel. This audience consists of people who are in the trenches. They will leave this program and go back to face the real-world challenge of running charter schools. Let's meet our panel and get started, shall we?

First we have ***Gail Dundas;*** she is a community relations manager for Intel Corporation's Oregon Site. (She is) a Public Relations Society of America award winner. Gail has done it all, from managing a pressroom to being a spokesperson for a political campaign. Next we have ***Mark Hatfield Jr.*** Mark, give them a little wave. Mark is a veteran of 20 years in the communications business. In directing corporate communications for the Port of New York and New Jersey, he had to deal with major airplane crashes, weather disasters, and the World Trade Center bank robbery. Currently, he is the Managing Director of Burson-Marsteller. Next we have ***Sherry Knight.*** Sherry is President of Knight Writers, a public relations firm in Michigan. One of her clients is the Michigan Association of Public School Academies. Next to Sherry, we have ***Bob Landauer.*** Bob is editorial columnist for *The Oregonian,* the largest newspaper in the Pacific Northwest and

the 25th largest in the United States. Bob has worked in Asia and the U.S. for *Time* magazine and was twice a Pulitzer Prize finalist. Next to Bob, we have ***Joe Lucente.*** Joe is a distinguished educator, a teacher, and an administrator in Los Angeles. Joe now is Codirector of a California charter school. He was one of five school directors from across the United States invited to the White House for a conference on charter schools. And next to Joe we have ***Eric Premack.*** Eric has been involved with the development of the charter-school concept since its inception in his native Minnesota in 1980. He is Codirector of the Charter Schools Development Center and a prolific and widely read author on the subject of charter schools. Please welcome our panelists.

[Applause]

Okay. So now that we have our panel of experts introduced, let's move right into defining our terms. Gail, we're going to start with you. Can you tell us briefly about community relations, what it does, or what it is supposed to do?

Gail: Sure, Sharon. Community relations is really part of the overall public relations function. Many organizations have community relations as its core, and community relations is supposed to help an organization become part of the community in which it operates, because that community is what is going to make an organization be successful in its efforts.

Sharon: Okay. Now let's move on to you Mark. Could you explain the relationship between

public relations, community relations, and public affairs?

Mark: Well, there are three terms that are often recklessly interchanged and thrown around. And to be honest with you, they are all inexact sciences so the definitions are somewhat inexact. But if you look at public relations as the macro, kind of the overarching practice or science of the three, and then community relations and public affairs tend to define arenas that you are operating in, public rela-

DEFINITIONS

Educational ***Public Relations*** is the planned and ongoing practice of communication. It relies on a comprehensive two-way communications process involving both the internal and external publics, with a goal of stimulating a better understanding of the role and objectives, accomplishments and needs of the school (National School Public Relations Association [NSPRA], 1998). Educational public relations programs assist in interpreting public attitudes, shaping policies and procedures in the public interest, and carrying out involvement and information activities which earn public understanding and support.

Community Relations is the continued, planned, and active participation with and within a community to maintain and enhance its environment to the benefit of both an organization and the community (NSPRA). Some of the best ways to build relationships with the community are to *involve them* in the school and with students and teachers.

Public Affairs, while relying on sound communications methods just as public relations and community relations do, steps into the public-policy, law-making, and regulation-making arenas. Its portfolio carries government relations. It seeks to bring an understanding of the organization to the political and public-policy venues, and it helps the organization to anticipate and adapt to public-policy influences.

tions is the practice of communication that is intended to shape perception and in some way affect either political, business, or social outcome. Public affairs tends to deal with areas that involve government, governance regulation and rules, and community affairs is usually defined by communicating with a given community, whether it's geographically defined or sociologically or economically defined.

Sharon: So we have our terms defined. Now let's go into exactly what a charter school is. Eric, what is a charter school?

Eric: Like community relations, it is a term that is somewhat difficult to understand, but basically it is a new form of public school, usually created and operated independent of the existing public school system, often created by parents or teachers or community groups or some conglomeration of those three. They operate under a five-year or 10-year performance contract called a charter. And in the charter you lay down what it is you expect that your school kids will learn and be able to do when they graduate from your charter school, and that allows you to operate a public school outside and independent of the traditional system. However, you do have to comply with a variety of fundamentals of the public school system. You can't discriminate. You may not charge tuition. And you have to live within the terms of your charter. But, in essence, it is a permission to run a new type of public school.

Sharon: Now, are all charter schools the same?

Eric: No. The one thing that you can say about all charter schools is that they are all different from one another, and it's very, very difficult to generalize about them. They really are tremendously different from one another.

Sharon: Thanks, Eric. Now, Sherry, what should charter schools be considering or planning with respect to developing positive public relations with the community?

Sherry: The term that you used, *planning*,

PLAN DEVELOPMENT

According to the National School Public Relations Association, the one common element of all successful public relations programs is that they are planned. A well-thought-out public relations plan will help ensure that a school carries out its mission and meets its goals with the support of its staff and community.

Exemplary public relations programs follow a four-step process (NSPRA, 1998):

1. Research—Investigate past and current media coverage and public opinion of your school.

2. Planning—Develop an action plan. Identify and develop your goals and objectives for your communication program. Base your research on your school mission and vision— what are you trying to accomplish?

Determine your target audience. What action do you want them to take? What is the best way to reach them? What kind of messages would motivate them? Where should the information be located? Who else would be interested in your school?

3. Implementation—After you have received approval from the administration and board, put your plan into action. Carry out your plan according to milestones and timelines within your plan. You will need to constantly revisit and revise your plan as needed throughout the year.

4. Evaluation—How will you know how well your plan is working? How will you know how to improve it? Assess what works; revise your plan.

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is absolutely critical. You do have to lay out a plan and know consciously what you are going to do in terms of community relations. I recommend that you know your audiences, know which groups of parents you will go after, which business leaders, which community leaders, and then concentrate on using ***milestones, special events,*** special programs in your schools to bring folks into your schools, into your classrooms. Give them access to your students, your parents, your teachers, and let them see what is so special about your school because that truly is the power of charter schools.

Sharon: Give me an idea, someone here, something that you had planned, a special event.

David Ellis, Audience: We had a talent showcase. Our kids are in the High School for Recording Arts and they released a CD, and we had a performance where they demonstrated their talent. A lot of people from the community came.

Claudia Ragar, Audience: Our event evolved around facility issues. We are ending our first year and this fall we have a new facility so we invited the community to come help us celebrate that accomplishment.

Sharon: Okay. So, there we go. So you plan a special event and that way you get that involvement that you need. Now, that brings us to Joe. The intersection that we are primarily interested in today, charter schools and community relations. Joe, tell us about how you have used your relationship with the L.A. press to promote good community relations.

Joe: Well, one of the things I did early on, when we became a charter school, was join the business organizations in our region. And over time, I became a credible member of those organizations. And I actually sat on the board of directors with the publisher of our local Los Angeles newspaper. And that relationship allowed me to have access to both him and his editorial boards. They would invite me to comment on educational

MILESTONES AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Milestones are high points or significant accomplishments within a community or school, such as the acquisition of a new facility or the opening of a new charter school. Special events are intended to stimulate an interest/involvement in a person, product, or organization by means of a focused "happening." They could also be activities designed to enable an organization to listen to and interact with its target audiences. Special events are frequently organized around milestones. In an effort to build community relationships and support, charter-school leaders can concentrate on using milestones and special events to bring people into their schools, into their classrooms, and let them see what is special about the school in order to initiate and encourage continued support.

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issues that were prevalent at the time. They would invite me to editorial boards. They would accept

op-ed

pieces from me and, more importantly, when we got into a real difficult situation, I knew that I could depend on them to cover it on the front page, if necessary.

Sharon: Now that brings me to the next question. This one is kind of near and dear to my heart. Bob, I'm going to ask you this one. Will you explain and give some suggestions as far as how folks can deal with the news media?

Bob: We think of ourselves as the town criers. We are interested in information. We are not interested in propaganda. We like to think that we can screen propaganda out. We resist bad ideas. Now, what's a bad idea? That's really difficult to say, but if you drag a bad idea around with you like a broken tail, you will constantly hear "no, no, no" from news editors, gatekeepers, whether it's radio, television, newspapers. So you have to learn to field-test ideas. Perhaps the basic piece of advice I would give charter schools, which tend to start off as small organizations, with very, very dedicated people who want their story told, is don't be greedy.

[Laughter]

Perhaps the most effective way to start is to call the education writer, education editor, and say, "The next time you do something, we have a really interesting example or two, and we should be used as part of the story." Most of the No's that come out to people who would like to be part, come because they say "We are the whole story." That's rarely the case. Show restraint and you will probably do fairly well.

Sharon: I like that. Don't be greedy. Be part of the story, don't say, "We are the whole shebang; we are the whole story." Has anyone had any kind of an interaction with the news media when it comes to the things that we are talking about? If so, raise your hand.

OP-ED

The editorial page in newspapers has strong readership among leaders and opinion leaders, says research. That is why the page opposite, known as Op-Ed—Opposite Editorial—is a highly desired arena for your point of view. Many newspapers now label the page as Opinion or Commentary, offering opinions from professional pundits and local folks who present a cogent point of view on local issues. Some radio and television stations also offer opportunities for public-opinion pronouncements. Scan your media outlets to see who might be offering these opportunities; ask them for their guidelines, and, when it's appropriate, develop a piece for submission.

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Marjanna Hulet, Audience: ... We had some problems where the local media, in our case, doesn't understand what charter schools are, and so they have misrepresented us, lumping us into stories with private schools, religious schools. And then when we try to explain to them we are different, they say, "Well, no. We said they were charter schools."

Bob: People, especially charter-school people, tend to be misrepresented because the comprehension level is still very low. You are reluctant to argue with people who buy their ink by the barrel. Wrong. Bad mistake. When somebody misrepresents you, you complain. C-O-M-P-L-A-I-N. There are ways to do this. There are only a few strings on a guitar, but there are lots of notes you can play if you do this properly. You can do it subtly and we'll get into it later.

Sharon: We are going to do something provocative. We're going to throw some community relations scenarios at our panel and our audience. The underlying question here is, How does a charter-school spokesperson handle the different perspectives in a community? Especially when those perspectives might be skewed or illogical?

(Scenario #1: The Economic Issue; The Equity Issue)

There is a group of parents and teachers trying to organize a charter school in a small town. Their largest hurdle is that the local teachers union, a few parents, and some school district representatives have made accusations on two issues. The economic issue is that the charter school is taking desperately needed money away from the traditional public schools. The equity issue is that the charter school is not serving all populations represented in the school district. If you were a charter-school leader, how would you address each of these accusations? Eric?

Eric: The first issue, the **economic** issue, is one where I think you need to get out (in) front and define the issue, and with that issue I think you need to get out (in) front

and say the money that we are bringing into the school doesn't belong to us. It doesn't belong to the traditional public school system. Rather, it belongs to the community at large, and we have made a decision in this state or in this community that money will follow the child. And if those children come to our school, then it is our money, but only because they have chosen to come here, and that we are not taking money away from anybody.

The second issue **(equity)** I think is a very important one and one that I really think you need to think about early in the development process of your school. Ideally, going back to our guest from Pueblo, you have developed relationships early on with the newspaper and media in your town, and they know all the steps that you have taken at your school to ensure that you have a student population that is representative of the district, and that you are able to cite data very quickly about: *This is the racial and ethnic and economic makeup of the students in our school.*

Gail: What would also help is the first tenet really of doing good solid public relations: research. So, you want to find out what people already believe in the community around you. What is it that they think about the economics? And then you will be able to position your

messages

so that they directly reply to what the people already believe about the economic realities of charter schools.

Jacquelyn Kyle, Audience: Getting a true feel for your cultural climate, your school, and community climate, I think is essential. Those are the people who actually can support and make or break what you're trying to do with your charter school. And I would just encourage everyone to keep that at the forefront of their thought when planning to operate successfully a charter school.

Sharon: And you had something over here. Excuse me. I'm going to pop in this way. Could you stand, please? There you go.

Harlod Green, Audience: Yes, I also believe that

MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT

- Capture and maintain a positive, proactive attitude and tone.
- Guard against overreacting to criticism. Focus on the positives of your school that may include:
  - –Accurate statistics and stories of student success
  - –Special programs and activities at school
  - –Student/teacher involvement in community efforts
  - –Innovative instructional programs
- Test messages on those you are trying to reach (such as parents) to make sure they are understood, motivating, and achieve the intended reactions.
- Develop a well-planned phrase about your school using approximately four to 10 words (Bonk, Griggs, & Tyres, 1999). Have the phrase capture the "heart" of your school, and make the phrase easy to say.

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there is a need in a community for a charter school and that need has to be defined, what it is the charter is going to provide. And through surveys, getting out to the community, going to churches, talking to people, finding out what it is that the community needs. And if you can create a school that is going to fulfill that need, it is going to give you vital information as to how to gain support for that school.

(Scenario #2: Crisis Communications)

Sharon: Our next scenario is really interesting, and I am going to throw this to Gail and to Mark.

A charter school focusing on experiential learning has taken their students into the mountains on an overnight educational trip. A student is responsible for an accidental fire resulting in hundreds of acres of burned national forest land. You are being approached by the media for comment. How do you respond? How can a charter-school leader be prepared for crisis situations like this one?

[Laughter]

Mark: I'll take a first shot at that and see how Gail can follow up behind. The answer begins in the question and it is with the word "prepared." Whether you are a charter school or any other organization that deals with the public or is going to have public exposure, part of your business plan—part of your operating plan—has got to include crisis preparedness. And that can be done in a number of ways, but it should include a number of very important elements: One, who the spokesperson is going to be (is decided) in advance. And once that is decided, that person should receive some level of media training and have the opportunity to (experience) a given set of scenarios or situations that you could probably mock up for a charter school, and do some crisis planning and media training that involves questions and answers, or mock press conferences. And in this case in particular ... without knowing any more detail about the scenario you gave, there are a number of things that would come into

Mark

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question. These would have been laid out in a crisis plan. Does the school take the point in terms of disseminating the information or (do) you let emergency services people do it? Do you work with them in a combined fashion? Does that single person who is representing the charter school make himself or herself available in an interactive situation or remain behind the scenes and issue a statement? A lot of these things will be determined by the nature of the event, what your perception in terms of the school's management or responsibility—or dereliction, perhaps—were. And those all come together in that critical moment and the fact that you have planned it or had an opportunity to prepare in advance, that gives you a lot more of a strong footing when you are faced with a situation such as you described.

Sharon: Gail?

Gail: Yeah, excellent answer, Mark.

[Laughter]

I would only add, obviously up front, getting the facts is absolutely critical. … The way you presented the scenario, it sounds like it was a done deal that this child did this. Did they really? What happened? What are all the consequences? If you repeat that, you know, is there an accusation there? The person is a minor. There are a lot of other elements that go into that and I think the planning and preparation would help you prepare.

Claudia Ragar, Audience: The scenario you brought up and your response really brings focus to a couple of major challenges for charter schools. One is that we are talking in terms of a leader of a school requiring skills that you do not find in a traditional public school. We are talking about someone who has the ability to be a spokesperson, to handle these public relations events. So when you are looking for a leader for a charter school, you are looking for some skills that might require paying a higher salary, yet we are on a very tight budget. Speaking of tight budget, you have talked about possibly having the technical assistance of a public relations firm or an expert in that area and

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charters rarely have that play in the budget for those type of services. So many of us have gotten very creative in terms of getting the community involved by bringing on board our board of directors expertise in these areas that we cannot afford to hire out.

Mark: The nature of a spokesperson, first of all, you are talking about a person who is running one of these charter schools who has to deal with parent-teacher organizations and with possibly teachers unions and school boards and children. The fact of the matter is, I think, the essential set of skills that is necessary to be an effective spokesperson already exist in the type of people who are going to be running these schools. And I wouldn't overestimate the need in terms of polish or experience. In fact, most of these are skills that can be trained or taught and I think that the basic criteria that you're using to select the administrators and the point people to run these schools (are) going to give you very good candidates. Just with a little polishing and training. A couple of key things, and not to take away potential business from my company, but these are not rocket-science lessons. A lot of it's common sense and I think you would be surprised at how effective someone who has never done it before, with the proper training, can actually be in this situation.

Sharon: ... Where do we find the ***public relations experts?***

Who are they?

Gail: There is a Public Relations Society of America, a national association .... They are in every state ... most large cities have chapters. You can go there and ask for assistance. Often ... they will run pro bono programs. You can also go to local universities that have public relations as a minor or a major and ask for classes to help develop a plan for you. There are agencies, such as the one that Mark works for; they also do pro bono work. There are communication experts all around you. You just have to seek them out and build the relationships there.

PUBLIC RELATIONS EXPERTS

Look first within your own community and circle of supporters for those with expertise in the public relations arena. Medium-to-large companies and organizations have communication professionals on staff who are willing to provide advice. If they believe in the cause, they frequently will volunteer their time to serve on a committee. Also, scan your community for advertising and public relations agencies. They sometimes will serve clients on a no-charge, public-service basis.

Some schools form a public relations or communications committee to help with the planning and implementation of those activities. It is important to remember, however, that the principal or designee is typically vested by the charter-school board to speak on behalf of the school. A public relations committee can be very helpful in supporting and strengthening those communication efforts and activities. However, while the committee may recommend and suggest both formally and informally, it must never overstep its bounds by acting and/or speaking inappropriately or without approval from the principal and/or board authority. Here are suggestions on who to include on this committee:

- Policy-level opinion leaders, such as board members
- Representatives of school-stakeholder groups such as teachers, support staff, students, parents, other community members
- Operational-level leaders, such as key administrators
- Opinion leaders within the community
- Communications professionals with experience in areas such as marketing, advertising, promotions, media relations, and other functions that support public relations

The charter-school association or resource centers in your state may be able to help you develop materials and work with you in promoting your charter school. Many also provide information (including contact information) about all the charter schools in your state. (The National Charter School Web Site is a central source to find state-association and resource-center information: www.uscharterschools.org.)

Sharon: Joe, I want to ask you something. What happens when a camera crew shows up right in front of the school?

[Laughter]

Joe: Well, it has happened on more than one occasion. And I guess the first thing that you have to do is—if in fact you are that point person, and I am—to make sure that you know why they are there before you make any statement. And then collect your thoughts, if you have the time to do so.

[Laughter]

Usually the press is not happy with a "no comment." And so, if it is only to say, "I really don't have the facts. As soon as I collect the facts, and I can comment, I will be happy to do so."

Sherry: Even in the most negative media situation, it is an opportunity for you to portray the characteristics that are the essence of your school, and of your personality. Responsibility. Commitment to children. Commitment to the community. A dedication to improvement and doing the right things.

Bob: Giving a "no comment" tends to work against you. At the same time, I am shocked and even appalled at people I have interviewed under stress situations who leap without having a sense of where they want to land.

[Laughter]

The situation we have right here, it's possible to say, "We are taking an attendance roll. We want to be certain that all the children are safe. We are checking to see whether everyone is healthy. We are trying to find out from the Forest Service the extent of the damage, and whether we can do anything to help them. We are gathering information and please get back to me; I would like to share more of this with you." You haven't said a darn thing

[Laughter]

but you portrayed yourself very, very sensitively. You haven't, as far as I can tell, not being a lawyer, increased your liability one whit. You are a business; your first obligation is to protect the interest of your business, not to satisfy my deadline.

building relationships

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

The best way to build relationships with the community is to involve them in the school and with students and teachers. Staff, board members, parents, and politicians can be your greatest allies in the community. But they need to be informed and educated about activities and events in your school. Open communication is key. This can be done through:

- Newsletters
- Brief progress reports
- Telephone trees
- Comment cards
- Web site

School–Community Involvement Activities

- Community-service programs
- Classes, such as parenting, citizenship, or how to help your child learn, held after school and in the evenings for parents and other community members
- Volunteer opportunities
- "Principal for a Day," where community members follow the principal to see how your school works

School District–Charter School Involvement Activities

- Talk with school-district board members and the superintendent; invite them to events. Keep them informed of your school's progress and activities.
- Work willingly with and through the bureaucracy when necessary.
- Approach the school district with the attitude that you are not better, only that you are different.

School–Charter Granting Agency Involvement Activities

- Keep communication open. Keep informed of their activities and inform them of yours. Answer correspondence, such as requests for information, promptly.
- Designate one person as the main contact to facilitate continuity in communication.
- If you have made a mistake, let them know what happened and how you are going to deal with it.

continued next page

(Scenario #3: Dealing with Criticism)

Sharon: Okay. Let's move on to our next scenario here. There are two parts to this particular scenario.

First part: In Illinois, the school district board members sent a letter critical of a charter school to all the parents in their district.

(Second part): In Arizona … the school district took out a full-page ad in the local paper on the benefits of attending the district's traditional public schools rather than a charter school. What could have been done to prevent these situations and what is the best way to deal with them now?

Sherry?

Sherry: You need to realize that in a competitive environment, which is what charter schools have created, these (types) of things will occur. And there are a number of ways that you can address them—react proactively, position yourself, et cetera.

First, in Michigan there have been a number of charter schools that have done a really terrific job of building

relationships

with the administrators in their traditional districts. And that helps because, although competition may demand that they send out a flyer to parents to try to keep kids in their school, the nastiness level can decrease if you have a relationship with those administrators. Depending on, if there is something in these materials that is absolutely wrong, you can write letters to the editor. You can send letters out to parents. You can send reaction pieces to your parents, to community leaders, to business leaders. I recommend that you have a database of supporters and that you are constantly adding to that. Yes, you've got 50 people at your last event. Who are the next 10 that you want to start to build a relationship with? And I recommend that when these (types) of things happen that you not get thrown off course. You have got, hopefully, a community relations plan and you know where you are headed and what you are going to promote and what you're going to focus on. Don't let that throw you into a

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School–Politician Involvement Activities

- Know the legislators that represent the area where your school is located.
- Communicate with your legislators often via telephone, e-mail, mail, or fax. Keep them up-to-date on current issues and activities of your school.
- Invite them to visit your school.

School–Parent and Student Involvement Activities

- Involve parents in the school in ways that will help their child and in ways that will help the school. Invite those who are interested and able to do so to take on key positions.
- Invite parents to all school events.
- Carry out strong communications with parents.
- Publish and distribute internal newsletters.
- Provide volunteer opportunities.
- Bestow awards for such things as student attendance or volunteer services. Celebrate with a ceremony. Invite parents and news media to attend.

School–Staff Involvement Activities

- Keep staff informed of what is happening through internal newsletters, staff meetings, and informal meetings.
- Appoint staff to decisionmaking boards or committees.
- Praise them to others when appropriate.
- Celebrate accomplishments.
- Praise them in the news media.

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negative, reactive, "Oh, I've got to keep going on. They said that the classrooms are just wide open and the kids are running wild." Don't let them take you off course to where that's all you are focusing on. Tell the story of your school, as you know it to be most effective and most powerful.

Marjanna Hulet, Audience: If we get back to what the definition of a charter school is ... that we are doing something different than the regular school system, then I see what just happened as a real positive.

Bob: I want to ask you something. In your towns, whatever they are, do you know what is the second or third most widely read part of your newspaper, after page one and the obituaries, especially by anyone over 40? It's *letters to the editor.*

If you want to make an imprint on your community, you will almost certainly make a better imprint with several short, clear, concise, to-the-point letters to the editor from different people than from the original full-page ad, or the original flyer to every member of the community, most of which just go into the trash without being read. You almost never make mileage by trashing your opponent. You make mileage by saying, "We serve a special need."

Mark: Even if you have got a one-paper town, and even if it does appear to be or you know it's the largest source or the most popular source of information, and editorial opinion, in your community, there are always alternative medium(s). There are radio call-ins; there's the Internet. And I think that everybody should take a serious look at the beginning of their school plan, as simple as it may start out, to come up with a home page for your school. Because that can come into play in crisis situations and promotional situations in marketing and general information distribution. There's a wide variety. And as the news-information technology evolves—and we are seeing this more and more on the Internet—it is an extraordinarily powerful tool if used in the right way. It requires you getting people to come to you, at least ini-

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Here are some basic guidelines about writing letters to the editor. First, look for the instructions that are usually printed near the letters to the editor section; abide by them. Read the letters that are already being published. Draft your letter carefully, making your key points. Sign your letter legibly; be sure to include your contact information. Many newspapers will verify by telephone that you are the writer of the letter.

Never write anything libelous—they won't print it and your school's image will be tarnished in the eyes of the editor and publisher.

Don't orchestrate a letter-writing campaign with "form" letters. It is ineffective because it's apparent that it's contrived. In mobilizing supporters for a letter-writing campaign, offer them brief key points and accurate addresses for mailing, but urge them to compose their own letters in their words. Here are some other tips (St. John, 1999):

- If you are reacting to a piece in the paper, carefully read the item several times. Highlight the objectionable portions. This will help you keep focused on the most crucial issues and respond with relevant messages.
- Assemble your key messages into main points and provide facts that support each position. Make sure the facts you provide are succinct and easily understood by the general public.
- State the purpose of your letter at the very beginning. For example, you may be writing to clarify a position, correct the record, or voice your indignation.

Also, keep the tone of your letter professional. You are not writing on behalf of yourself, but on behalf of the organization you represent (or support). Keep the writing clear and concise.

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory has produced a document titled *Founding Charter Schools: A Basic Guide to Working with the News Media* that provides more information on communication vehicles and working with the media.

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tially, but once they know you are there and they know where your page is, you can use that to maintain your appearance of being open and accessible, to providing yourself the opportunity to get information out in a preemptive way if there is a situation that's coming up that you know is going to draw news attention. And, again, it becomes one of those tools that helps you end-run the paper, if that's what you need to do, at least as a preliminary tactic. From your situation I think a little persistence and relentlessness, and especially if the first piece was negative and it was attacking you all, there really is almost a responsibility on behalf of the newspaper to give you a graf (paragraph) or two in a letter to the editor. And that comes back to the whole idea of maintaining that database, having third-party advocates, strong credible people within the community, who can speak on your behalf, or write on your behalf, that aren't necessarily directly linked to you, to further your goals and your messages.

Daniél Escalante, Audience: I agree with everything that people have said so far. I think I would offer one more thing. In a situation like that, I would look at it and ask myself, who has the power here? And I think what I would do, in addition to everything you have said, is to contact our allies that are on the school board and have them duke it out, and let them take it to the papers and to the press or whatever. And so it's a bigger issue than just a school board member who is perceived as having power and the charter school who is perceived as not having much power.

PRESENTATIONS

Presentations can range from a one-on-one dialogue all the way up to a speech to a very, very large group. Whether it's large or small, plan your presentation well in advance. Develop your key points, decide what supporting materials you need, prepare and/or assemble those materials, and then *practice, practice, practice* out loud until you feel very comfortable with what you're saying. Provide a "leave behind," such as a brochure, flyer, or handout, for your audience to "take away" and review your key points and to contact you for clarification or other reasons. Make sure the "leave behind" has your name and contact information. The secret to a good presentation is planning, preparation, and practice. Then stick to your plan. All of us have seen an emerging strong presentation quickly disintegrate as the presenter gets off track and really never finds an effective way back.
Here are some tips from Eastman Kodak:

- The first step in developing your presentation is to identify the theme and then to develop your message. Consider the behavior change you want to create in your audience. What is the purpose of your presentation? What is the theme or topic? Who will be there? What is the background of your audience? What kind of behavioral change do you hope to instill in your audience? How do you want your audience to respond? What do you specifically want them to remember?
- Once you've focused on your purpose, you have to determine your message—*the key idea* you want to communicate. Avoid the temptation to introduce superfluous information—stick to the main ideas of your topic.
- When developing your message—and your visual aids—keep it simple. Try summing up your message in the form of an outline or bullet points. If you can't state your message in approximately six to 10 words or less, perhaps your thinking hasn't crystallized.

Marketing to Potential Students and Parents

Sharon: There are common community relations problems. Let's ask our panel to give us some tips on how to deal with them. We could probably make a full-blown discussion out of any one of these problems, but in the scope of our short program, I think what you're about to hear will be very insightful.

Let's begin by asking our panel, How do you market to potential students and parents?

Joe: Well, the best way is word of mouth. If you have established a good reputation, if you have happy students and happy parents, they are going to talk to other students and other parents. That can be your most powerful tool in advertising, quite honestly.

JoAnn Cole-Hansen, Audience: One of the things that we did in our start-up operations, we had

presentations

with various organizations within our community ... like the Board of Realtors℠ because they have a captive audience in their car when they are touring around the city with prospective parents moving into the community. We also had additional ones with other various groups that we felt could promote our charter school in a positive way.

Gail: Just playing off that: Identifying your specific

audiences

that you are going to go after. Because, if you are in a decent size community and you just go out there and throw information around, you are not going to necessarily get the responses you are looking for. You want to specifically niche the groups and say: Okay, here is an intact audience that we want to communicate our message to, and, hopefully, get some response from. And if you can do that in a few different areas, then you will have a lot more success than if you just go out there and broadly spread your message.

TARGET AUDIENCES

To determine your target audiences—which means those groups of people you intend to reach and engage at some level—answer these questions: Who are you trying to reach to obtain your goals and objectives? What do you want them to do? What action do you want them to take? What is the best way to reach them?

To say "the community" is your audience is fruitless; it provides little to no direction as to how you might effectively reach and engage people. You need to "group" your audience to provide a "target" at which you're aiming. Think about what subgroups exist in your community, and identify those you want to reach. Here is a list of groups to start you thinking. Each community is different, and its groups may vary.

- Civic and community groups, such as: Rotary, Optimists, Chamber of Commerce, Business Roundtable, Lions, Elks, Shriners, Soroptimists, Grange, and a host of others
- The charter-granting agency (sponsor)
- Parents and family members of current and potential students
- The district and/or school board
- Local government officials
- State legislators that represent your area

Here are some ideas for working with target audiences:

- Remember: If you are not supplying information, others will and it may not be the information you want.
- Reach out to your audiences before you need them or it could be too little too late!
- Think about the impression your school makes every day for visitors. Keep your school site clean, warm, and welcoming for potential visitors. Front-line staff and/or students should be trained accordingly.
- Realize that communication takes place anytime someone from your school (parent, teacher, student, staff, board member) relates information about your school to the public. It is important that all individuals are aware and informed of important issues and changes in your school.

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You and Your Sponsor

Sharon: Now here is another question: How do you promote a positive relationship with a sponsor?

Eric: I think it's very important to start early and understand that from the get-go—whether you like them or not, whether they like you or not—this is going to be a long-term relationship and go in and have a chat. And if you need to have a private chat and get very frank with them, and explain to them that we're here, we're here to stay, and we can either choose to get along or we can not get along. And … really make sure that you get off to the right step. If things don't get off to the right step, never go the low ground. Always take the high ground and try to bring them up.

Positive Educational Reform

Sharon: How do we promote ourselves positively and encourage education reform without coming off as a group of troublemakers?

Joe: Continually let the message be heard that this is for children …

Eric: Exactly.

Joe: … and what we are trying to accomplish here is to increase student achievement and that's the bottom line.

Jacquelyn Kyle, Audience: There are those of us who have left traditional public schools and, in doing so, we left relationships with people, important people, in those public schools that do good things. I think it's important that we maintain those relationships and give them an opportunity to learn what's being offered through charter schools.

Involving the Parents

Sharon: How about this one. How to involve parents in the school? Best tip.

Joe: You have to find out what it is that parents want and need and then meet those wants and needs. It varies from community

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to community. In our neighborhood, before our parents could get really involved in the school, they had some basic needs. And so we met those basic needs, or attempted to, through our family center. Everything from having a food pantry to a clothing store to having literacy classes, ESL classes, citizenship classes, parenting classes, computer classes. Whatever it is that they want and need that will eventually help to strengthen the educational program for their child, that's what you need to do.

Sharon: Anyone want to add anything to that one?

Bob: I believe that one of the best things you can do in that context is not to market your services so much as to market the parents who are already involved, which is to simply go out and say, "One of the things that truly sets us apart is that all our parents are involved and it's not a comfortable school to be with unless you are willing to be involved." And create, literally create, peer pressure. This is an expectation; it's part of the overt contract.

Eric: Sharon, I think it's very important, and this is not just with parents, but overall, in all your community relations, make sure you are very careful about what you promise to deliver. Be modest in your promises. We often say, "Promise low, deliver high." Often, when you are dreaming about your new school and what you want and hope to achieve, it's natural to make a lot of promises. But be very careful because starting up and running a school is a lot tougher than a lot of folks think, and you need to be careful about what can we really deliver here. And make them feel a part of that process, so that if things don't get off to the start you had hoped for, that they feel a part of that, and own a piece of the responsibility for that, and are still with you as you move through it.

Working With the Media

Sharon: How does a charter school deal effectively with the media?

Bob

Bob: Don't set yourself up to be your own worst enemy. Don't be a victim. A gentleman asked me just a few minutes ago: "I agree to an interview; I give them 15 minutes of my life. Every time, they print the first thing I said, and the last thing I said, and ignore what was in the middle; doesn't matter." I said, "My advice, really, is to say, 'We expect accountability for ourselves in charter schools and we set that as a standard for all the people we deal with. That includes the press.'"

Joe: If I might add something I learned the hard way. The more you say, the more likely you are to be misquoted or something taken out of context and used in a different way. So, be succinct, be clear, and don't be totally loquacious. If I could just further expand something here—I think it's terribly important—you need to establish the rapport with those reporters, with the television news directors, or whoever they are. As difficult as that may seem, eventually they will come to you for something. And for me, it started very simply by one of the reporters asking for my home phone. And my initial gut reaction was to say "No." And I said, "Well you know, I could see where that would be beneficial to you. And it would also be beneficial to me to have yours." That becomes invaluable if you ever need media coverage immediately.

Gail: Another reason why you might find yourselves on the negative end of a news story is because of the way you are telling your story. So what you want to do is remember that these folks are only going to pick up from you what you keep hitting them with over and over again. What are your key messages? What are your sound bites, if you will? What are those three things that, if you pick up that newspaper in the morning, you want to see clearly come across about what it is (that) you do?

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Sharon: You may spend 15 minutes to half an hour with a television reporter or a radio reporter, but keep in mind, in television, for example, that 15 minutes has got to be pared down to two minutes or one and a half minutes. And most of it is the actual read that the reporter is doing, telling the story. And sometimes what they do with your sound bites is they plug you in to enhance the story, to be the expert in the story, and so that 15 minutes actually boils down to 20 seconds.

Sharon: Your best community relations tip to this one.

How to Recruit Qualified Teachers

Joe: I receive five to six resumes a week. And we have a relationship with the local university. They send us their best student teachers because they want to teach in the best schools, et cetera. And so success begets success. And you need to establish those relationships, open your doors, don't be afraid to let people come in and see what's going on, and it becomes your best advertisement.

Sharon: What if you are starting out, you are a new charter school?

Eric: You have to hunt. Quality teachers don't spend a lot of time reading the want ads or the job postings. You need to know (who and where the best teachers in your community are). And go out and sit down with them personally and explain the vision of your school to them. And what their place might be within your school and ask them to apply. Because they are not going to come knocking on your door. Quality teachers are in short supply everywhere, and if you want top talent you have to go out and hunt it down.

Sharon: Now, I am going to ask you to go one step further than that. Where do you start hunting?

Eric: By talking to folks in other schools and asking, and be able to articulate your school's instructional program and vision. And say, "Do you know anybody who would be really good at doing this? Someone who is open-

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minded and flexible and can work in a start-up organization, and brings those kinds of teaching talents to our school?" Then go out and track them down. Sometimes they are going to be reluctant to tell you about them because they are their best teachers, and be cognizant of that.

Inexpensive School Promotions

Sharon: Here's our last tip. Your best tip as far as inexpensive ideas for promoting a school.

Mark: I think anytime you are dealing in an environment where funds are precious, and you don't have the luxury of promotional and marketing budgets that perhaps a consumer-products manufacturer might use, you need to always think in terms of nontraditional routes. And just as the approach to the Realtors℠ is a good example of that, think through what you do in a normal day, or what parents do in a normal day, and where they are coming in contact with people or organizations that can serve as channels for you and for your message, and for your flyer, or for your name, or for your

Web site.

And don't think in terms of the kids who are about to start school; go back a little further. I mean diaper bags they give out at hospitals, Mommy & Me classes, things that are more toddler focused, areas where you can get a little postcard, flyers, or something that has your name and your Web site. Again, that Web site. If you can just get out a URL Web address on something, enough to cause someone the curiosity to type it in and hit enter. Now you've got them and now they are captive, at least for a few moments. And what you do on that front page of your Web site, and the kind of things you can hit them with, can be very important toward your goal of promoting the school and its messages.

Sherry: You have got to put the time and energy into getting the data and the measurement and the assessment, collecting those anecdotes. We just did a wonderful story in our state newsletter on a school where,

WEB-SITE DEVELOPMENT

A Web site on the Internet is a prominently visible and widespread public presentation of information and image. As with any communication vehicle, the posting of a Web site, and ongoing maintenance, should be done with careful thought as to purpose, target audiences, key messages, content, format, and how feedback will be sought and handled. If your school wants to develop a Web site, but lacks the design and technical expertise among board members, staff, students, or volunteers, your first step is to collect information. Look first to your sponsoring agency, then to regional or state education agencies and other schools that have a Web site.

As recommended by education-Web expert Rick Simms at OPEN (Oregon Public Education Network), here are some places where you might start collecting information:

- The OPEN Web site (www.open.k12.or.us) has some basic information related to Web-page design and creation. The information can be found in its "Just In Time Training" section (www.open.k12.or.us/jitt/web/author.html).
- Another place to look is www.davesite.com/webstation/html/. Also, both Netscape (home.netscape.com/) and Internet Explorer (www.msn.com/) have links off their main pages related to Web-page design, creation, and even free Web-page hosting.

Try these URLs:

- Netscape– home.netscape.com/sitecentral/index.html
- Internet Explorer– homepages.msn.com/

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in three graduating classes, they've had 19 graduates. Fifteen of those are in college or universities, about 12 of those are on dean's lists. Great anecdotal information.

Joe: One of the things that I picked up from a CEO that befriended me early on was the necessity to keep a list of accomplishments. So that we can look back when we're frustrated and we don't feel like we're moving fast enough, and it brings us back to center. Kind of puts a smile on your face. "Oh yeah, we did do that, you know?" It is also a very powerful public relations piece when people come to you and say, "Well, what actually have you done?" And you can pull out a three-page list of accomplishments. And they can take their pick. It's very powerful to utilize as a tool.

Sharon: This has been really a very lively discussion. I have felt like I learned a lot. How about you? Did you feel pretty good about this?

[APPLAUSE]

On behalf of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, I want to thank you for the time you've spent watching this program. We would like to invite you to contact us with any comments and questions. The challenge of building good charter schools that will be a welcome part of any community is ongoing and vital.

Sherry

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Audience

Charter-School Teams Participating in the Academy

Eden Park Academy, Austin, Texas
- Marc Goebler
- Margaret Hill
- Julie Lee
- Garrett Whittier

Erath Excels! Academy, Stephenville, Texas
- Darlene Bradshaw
- Amanda Burns
- Sherry Harvick
- Debra Miller

Gateways to Success Charter School, Fallon, Nevada
- Judy Kroshus
- Cynthia H. Kuhn
- Mavis Lawrence
- Jere Schultz

High School for Recording Arts, St. Paul, Minnesota
- David Ellis
- Jeff Palm
- Sandy Tate
- Phil Winden

Jean Massieu School, Riverton, Utah
- Jeff Allen
- Marla Broetz
- Minnie Mae Wilding-Diaz
- Jan Lee Williams

Nerstrand Elementary School, Nerstrand, Minnesota
- Janelle Alexander
- Bonnie Jean Flom
- Barb Grote
- Christine Reed

New Beginnings Charter School, Fairbanks, Alaska
- Linda (Lou) Brown
- Harlod A. Green
- Valerie Naquin
- Mark Umphrey

Nova Charter School, Dallas, Texas
- Jacquelyn A. Kyle
- Hillery Motsinger
- Lisa Watts Northern
- Reginald Walker

Odyssey Charter School, Pasadena, California
- Kathleen O'Sullivan
- Cinda Russell
- Jared Lancer
- Gretchen Witte

Pocatello Community Charter School, Pocatello, Idaho
- Linda Creighton
- Mike Engle
- JoAnn Cole-Hansen
- Marjanna Hulet

Precision High School, Phoenix, Arizona
- Kathlyn Hughes
- Wendy Olexy
- George W. Parsons
- Jack Janousek

Sojourner Charter School, Boulder, Colorado
- Michael C. Reynolds
- Daniél Escalante
- Audrey Romeo
- Carol Collier

The New City School, Long Beach, California
- Paul Astin
- Ted Hamory
- Stephanie N. Lee
- Olivia Estrada

The Odyssey School, Denver, Colorado
- Monica Hughes
- Lucretia Peebles
- Claudia Ragar
- Shirley Stafford

Will Carleton Academy, Hillsdale, Michigan
- Deanna Gaberdiel
- Paula Karlovich
- Denise A. Meister
- Mary Wolfram

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Credits

Oregon Public Broadcasting/Creative Ventures:
CoCo Connell, Oregon Public Broadcasting
Bob O'Donnell, Director
Arvada Parrish, Producer

Closed-Captioning:
LNS Captioning, Portland, Oregon

Simultaneous Onsite Spanish and American Sign Language Translation:
P-S Squared, Inc., Portland, Oregon

Screen Captures from Videotape:
Pace Video Center, Portland, Oregon

Videotape Label and Print-Cover Design:
Merianne Snow

NWREL Video Concept and Production Team:
Karen Blaha
Carla Culley
Dr. Joyce Ley
Jed Schwendiman

NWREL Annotated-Transcript Design and Production:
Denise Crabtree

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